*****VERY IMPORTANT PLATTER **** GOOD ALBUM, HEAR IT IF YOU CAN ***WORTHWHILE **DULL OR DISAPPOINTING *RE-CYCLE

albums

UFO
'Strangers In The Night — A Double Live Album'
(Chrysalis CJT 5) *****

UFOria

"OH NO," you groan, "not *another* double live album. . ."

Oh yes. The umpteenth four sider that's maybe going to follow in the multi-platinum footsteps of 'Frampton Comes Alive', the one that really started it all.

But this one's no ordinary example of the genre. It's no 'Two For The Show', no 'All The World's A Stage,' and *especially* no 'Song Remains The Same'. This is a UFO double live album, recorded last year at concerts in Chicago and Illinois, produced by Ron Nevison, featuring the multifarious talents of recently departed guitarist Michael Schenker . . . and the end result is titanic. T-I-T-A-N-I-C.

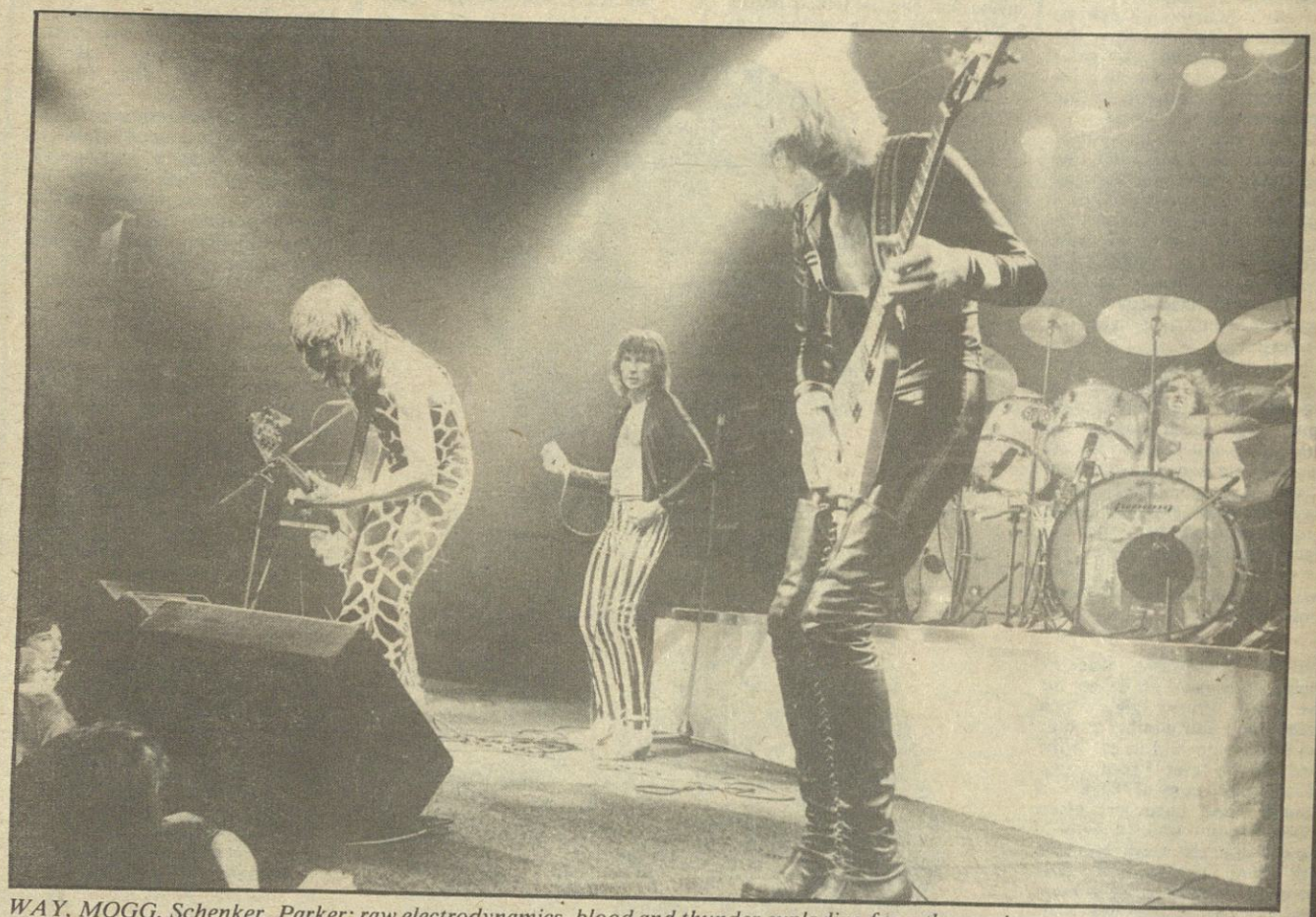
If any album's going to break UFO big worldwide, then 'Strangers In The Night' is the one. Bristling with hard rocking onstage power, the record contains a selection of numbers from the band's five studio recorded Chrysalis LPs, all of them benefitting from extra added live impetus — particularly the ones culled from the first three Leo Lyons produced discs ('Phenomenon', 'Force It' and 'No Heavy Petting'). Songs like 'Shoot Shoot', 'Let It Roll' and most of all 'Out In The Street' and 'This Kid's' have undergone complete transformations, such are the raw electro-dynamics of this album.

Beginning with a full-throated "Hello Chicago! Would you please welcome, from England, U-F-O!" call to battle, the blood and thunder of 'Natural Thing' explodes from the speakers, steamhammer pounding your senses into blissful submission.

After this simplistic beginning, the full and varied abilities of UFO are revealed in the next track, 'Out In The Street'. As the closing powerchord of 'Natural Thing' begins to fade, band guitarist/keyboard player Paul Raymond edges in with some deft, graceful, ultra-delicate atmospheric piano work, bringing the energy level down a little and setting the scene for 'Street'. And later, after a selection of Schenker licks and some mature, well-rounded vocals from singer Phil Mogg, you suddenly realise that UFO's carefully calculated balance of restraint and rip-roaring rock and roll is on a par with the 'Oo at their very best, no messin'.

'Only You Can Rock Me' and 'Doctor Doctor' (again with a gentle piano beginning) close the side, and quickly flipping the record over you get to hear three more cuts, 'Mother Mary', 'This Kid's' (listen to Mogg spit out the lyrics *'Can't get it in — can't get it out'* and marvel as Schenker *creates* over the basic boogie rhythm laid down by Raymond) and 'Love To Love', before having to return the record to its sleeve, slipping out sides three and four from the opposite end of the gatefold in the process.

Three is my favourite in fact, comprising just two tracks, 'Lights Out' and 'Rock Bottom'. 'Lights' thunders along, is played really fast but at the same time with cool confidence. . . and when Mogg sings *'lights out, lights out in Chicago'* instead of *'in London'* the crowd just erupts. A neat touch. 'Rock Bottom' is the nearest UFO have ever got to gonzoid HM (except maybe for their old encore number 'Boogie For George', eh Richard?) and I love it, a sucker especially for the mindless *'Rockbottomrockbottomrockbottom!'* bits — if they'd gone on until the end of side three and carried right over for all of side four I wouldn't have minded. Actually, the number is not without its subleties, i.e. the *'Where do we go from here?'* section and at various times during Schenker's long, extended and quite magical solo, but overall it just sends me into wide-eyed metal-induced delirium.



WAY, MOGG, Schenker, Parker: raw electrodynamics, blood and thunder exploding from the speakers, etc, etc.

Side four is a slight letdown after the glory of 'Rock Bottom'. Four tracks, 'Too Hot To Handle', 'I'm A Loser', 'Let It Roll' and 'Shoot Shoot', and out of them all 'Loser' succeeds best with the usual sensitive keyboards/heavy guitar attack juxtaposition combining with some vivid evocative lyrics to make for all-round irresistibility.

A marvellous double album then, one that, as far as I'm concerned, shoots UFO right up to the top of the UK heavy rock league and leaves Sabbaths, your Zeppelins, your Bad Cos (wherever they are) and everybody else (even Nutz) floundering, gaping in speechless surprise and admiration.

And also, of course, 'Strangers In The Night' is a fine testament to the virtuoso guitaring capabilities of Michael Schenker. How is his replacement ex-Lone Star man Paul Chapman shaping up on UFO's current British tour? All will be revealed on page 29.

GEOFF BARTON